

Flying high! Wycombe venture proves a great success

IT WAS an example of Wycombe Wanderers' professional attitude to football that they chose to fly up to their Amateur Cup match with Evenwood Town on Saturday. And without a doubt the trip was a great success (writes Stuart Earp).

It is believed to be the first time an amateur club had flown to a match and the main reason for Wycombe's decision to travel by plane was to avoid four of their players taking both Friday and Saturday off work.

The trip started from Loakes Park where the team and officials caught a coach bound for Heathrow Airport. The players had time for coffee before we

boarded the British Midland Viscount.

There was a surprise for Wanderers chairman Jack Smethurst on the flight as a loudspeaker announcement welcomed the Blues on board with a special mention for Jack who was celebrating his birthday. Treasurer Roger Lee had brought along a cake, iced

in Wycombe's colours, which was presented to Jack by one of the hostesses. Jack was wished a happy 28th birthday, although he admitted to be all of 34 afterwards!

Despite some minor turbulence just before landing at Tees-side, everyone seemed well pleased with the first stage of the journey, including one

rather relieved committee man who had just flown for the first time.

A coach met us at the airport at about 10.30 and from there we travelled to The George Hotel at Piercebridge, overlooking the River Tees. The players got off about half a mile before the hotel to stretch their legs while the more lazy of us stayed in the coach.

After lunch (steak and roast for the players) we made our way to the Welfare Ground at Evenwood which was situated under the shadow of a large coke factory. The outlook was pretty bleak and the blustery wind which had greeted us off the plane at Tees-side was still very much in evidence. Some committee men were somewhat disappointed with the turn-out from home officials. In fact, none met the team off the coach.

Several of the Wycombe supporters who had made the arduous journey by car were already at the ground while the five coaches, which had set off from Wycombe at 11.30 on Friday night, arrived soon afterwards. The players seemed fairly happy with the pitch which although sloping slightly, had a good covering of grass, and they then went off to change in the pavilion shared by the local cricket club.

During the match there were one or two unpleasant scenes in the 900 strong crowd which culminated with several youths being ejected from the ground by the local constabulary.

The match itself was rather typical of the conditions — hard. Several players received injuries but they managed to overcome Evenwood's physical tactics with some excellent first half football to run out 3-0 winners.

Manager Brian Lee was pleased with the result. "We came here to get a result — and we did just that," he told me. "We didn't play particularly well because of the elements, but we did enough."

The players too, were well satisfied with the performance. Keith Mead admitted the home forwards gave him very little worry while his fellow centre back Dave Bullock was cheerful despite a painful nose injury.

Dave paid tribute to the Wycombe fans who had made the journey. "I thought the crowd were tremendous and really helped us," he said.

The players didn't stay long at Evenwood before heading back for the airport. The flight back was pleasantly uneventful, touching down just before 8 o'clock. On the coach back the players were in fine voice. Jack Smethurst was serenaded with "Happy Birthday" and one of the more infamous Rugby songs before arriving back at Loakes Park at 9 p.m.

Blues can go third

WYCOMBE Wanderers have a great chance to overhaul Hendon for third place in the Rothmans Isthmian League Division One on Saturday. The Blues are at home to Kingstonian (2.30 p.m.).

Wycombe have reverted back to Saturday soccer after playing Corinthian Casuals and Bracknell on Sundays during this month. Secretary Bert Crump explained that as it is now optional for players affected by the three day week to work on Wednesday instead of Saturday.

So it seems that the Blues will be playing their matches on Saturdays in the near future.

If Hendon eventually overcome Harwich and Parkstone in the Amateur Cup first round, third replay in midweek, they will meet Rothmans Isthmian League Division Two leaders Tilbury on Saturday in the second round.

ROTHMANS ISTHMIAN LEAGUE Division 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bishops	29	16	8	5	57	19	56
Dulwich	30	15	11	4	49	24	56
Hendon	23	16	5	2	41	10	53
Wycombe	23	18	4	3	61	21	52
1. Head	25	15	3	7	53	25	48
Hayes	26	14	6	6	52	27	48
L'stone	26	14	6	6	40	22	48
Tooting	32	12	7	13	44	46	43
Oxford	29	10	12	7	31	34	42
Ilford	29	11	8	10	38	34	41
Barking	30	10	6	14	40	49	36
King's nian	26	8	10	8	33	25	34
Sutton	26	8	10	8	34	35	34
Walton	19	9	5	5	32	23	32
Enfield	24	9	6	10	30	26	32
Hitchin	22	9	5	8	40	35	32
Wal'stow	29	8	8	13	32	46	32
Woking	17	9	1	7	29	29	28
Bromley	30	6	6	18	30	48	24
Clapton	30	4	2	24	17	101	14
St. Albans	29	2	4	23	22	71	10
Casuals	26	2	2	22	17	66	8



Evenwood goalkeeper Brian Crampton and defender Colin Hallimond are powerless to stop Larry Pritchard's header rolling over the line for Wycombe Wanderers first goal in Saturday's Amateur Cup second round tie on Saturday.